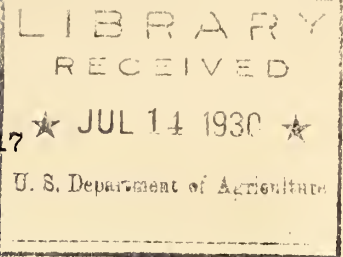


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Tuesday June 24, 1930



A series of radio talks by W. R. M. Wharton, chief, eastern district, Food, Drug and Insecticide Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time through WJZ., New York and the following other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company: KWK, St. Louis; WREN, Kansas City, KFAB, Lincoln; WRC, Washington; WBZA, Boston; KSTP, St. Paul; WSM, Nashville; WAPI, Birmingham, WJAX, Jacksonville; WPTF, Raleigh; WRVA, Richmond.

My friends this is your Government representative telling you how your food and drugs are safeguarded through the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, and telling you how to read labels. You may be assured that the Federal Food and Drugs Act operates in your interest as an economic safeguard and a health protection medium for every man, woman and child in the Nation. My personal experience story today will concern what happened to a large consignment of putrid canned salmon when an effort was made to place it on the market.

It has happened occasionally in the past that certain canners of salmon have packed fish which had spoiled and become tainted through delay in handling and improper icing. The occurrence that I am about to tell you of happened some years ago. At the present time canned salmon is practically always sound and wholesome.

A wholesale grocer in one of our large cities had an offer from a canner, at a very low price of a large consignment of salmon and in due course the sale to this wholesale grocer was consummated and the goods were received by him. Your Government agent, whose business it is to test products which have been shipped in interstate commerce, located this consignment almost immediately upon its receipt by the wholesale grocer and upon examination, he found that the shipment consisted of a large percentage of cans containing putrid fish. Thereupon a libel was filed in the Federal Court and the product was seized, and finally the federal judge handed down a decision ordering condemnation and destruction of the shipment. On a certain day all of the offending boxes of canned salmon were taken to a Mississippi River front dump to be destroyed and a movie news reel company hearing of the pending destruction, sent one of its camera men to take a picture of the event. The enterprising news reel man wishing to set the stage asked the United States Judge who had handed down the destruction decree, the United States Attorney who had handled the matter for the United States Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration, and the United States Marshall who carries out the judge's orders, as well as the Government food inspector to attend the taking of the news reel picture. The continuity ran something like this. --

A scene is depicted on the Mississippi River front. The environs show us a smoldering city dump. Our eyes are focused on a pile of oblong boxes, and a large pile of boxes it is. A lot of laborers are engaged in opening these boxes and they dump out of each, forty-eight cans of a product labeled, "RED SALMON". Another lot of men with sharp hatchets, cut a wide dent into each can, and each can as it is cut is passed to the food and drug inspector who smells the contents, registers an expression that he has encountered a

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disagreeable odor, and passes the can to the United States Attorney. The United States Attorney smells, and by his expression pronounces the product bad. He passes the container to a Federal Judge. The Federal Judge takes a whiff, shakes his head negatively, and hands the can to the United States Marshall. The United States Marshall heaves the offending food product into the surging floods of the "Father of Waters", and the picture closes. Probably some of my listeners may have seen in their favorite movie theater this news reel portraying an instance of the destruction of an unfit food product.

It is by actions such as these that your food and drug supply is protected by the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act.

Have you ever considered the fundamental reasons for the use of artificial colors in Food? And the reasons why you see such terms as "Artificially Colored", "Artificial Certified Color added", and the like, on so many food labels.-- Have you thought of their real significance?-- Perhaps you have thought when you have seen such statements on labels that a part or all of the color of the food has been given to it by an added artificial color; but this is not all you should know. You should be able to understand the true, the relative, and the comparative significance of such a label in its relation to every food product in which color is used. You must so consider such labels if you are to become intelligent label readers and therefore discriminating buyers.

I am going to try to interpret added food color label declarations for you in such a way that you yourselves may hereafter understand their full and complete meaning when you encounter them. Nature has tinted our natural foods with all the colors of the rainbow, and we have formed the habit as the ages have passed, of associating various flavors with the colors of products. Take for example, blackberries, as we see them on the bush.-- If they are black, we know without tasting them that they are ripe and luscious. If they are red, we know that they are unripe and sour. Again we know that a yellow apple has a different flavor from a red one. These things we know by experience and this experience is infallible. We possess similar knowledge about all of our natural foods and their colors mean a great deal to us. Colors not only guide us as to ripeness, as to flavor, as to variety, but the density of the color of natural products often denotes their degree of superiority and lusciousness.

It has been said that we eat with our eyes. My friends, this is a fact, not just an expression.

When attractive food is set before us we receive an agreeable impulse and this sets in motion the digestive processes even before the food enters our mouths. How does this happen? The sight of attractive food stimulates and increases the flow of the appetite gastric juice, increases its quantity, in preparation to receive and digest the food we are about to eat. From this natural fact, we get the expression, "It makes my mouth water."

Now, friends, since natural colors in foods are actually such reliable and important indices of character and quality, the addition of artificial colors to foods assumes a very great importance as affecting these considerations.

Now let us consider specifically the reasons why artificial colors are added to foods. We may divide these reasons into four sections.

(1) Colors are added to foods for decorative purposes alone. For example, we find in some candies all of the colors of the spectrum added to arbitrarily make the bonbons look pretty, to increase their attractiveness, and for no other reason.

(2) The second reason for the addition of artificial colors to foods is to supply a natural deficiency in the amount of natural color present, and to make products appear more attractive. For example, take canned tomato products, when they are artificially colored red, and when they are not inferior, the natural color is intensified and they may be made thereby to appear more attractive.

(3) The third reason for the use of artificial color is to make imitation products look like real ones. A good example of this is in the case of imitation vanilla extract, - such an imitation extract would look like water if it were not artificially colored. When colored it looks like real vanilla extract.

(4) The fourth reason for using artificial color in foods is to conceal damage or inferiority. Examples of these uses might be the addition of artificial color to canned Navy beans to hide black spots or damage on them, which sometimes result from a plant disease known as anthracnose. The use of color here would conceal the black spots or damage. The use of artificial yellow color in a pound cake made without eggs would conceal the inferiority of the cake, since, if color was not used, the product would indicate by its own color the absence of eggs.

Now, label readers, artificial color is not required to be declared on labels of foods when it is for decorative purposes and when added color is a normal constituent, such as certain candies. Artificial color added under any other conditions must be declared on the label, but the use of artificial color to conceal damage or inferiority is illegal and color may not under any circumstances be legally used for this purpose, whether it is declared or not.

As a matter of interest, let me say that butter and cheese are allowed to be colored by special law without declaration on the label, whereas oleomargarine when colored is penalized by a special law to the extent of being taxed at the rate of 10 cents per pound.

Except when colors are used for decorative purposes alone, hues are employed which simulate natural products. This is best illustrated by saying that you probably never have seen peas colored blue, nor macaroni colored red.

From the foregoing, my friends, you will see the addition of artificial colors in foods has a different significance, depending upon the circumstances of their use. Certain products are always artificially colored, no matter where or by whom made. Certain foods are never artificially colored. Other foods are colored in some instances and by some manufacturers and are not colored artificially in other instances and by other manufacturers. In order to appreciate the significance of the label, "Artificially Colored," you must

consider all of the foregoing facts and make comparisons, discriminating against products which are artificially colored when such discrimination is justified, accepting products without question, when there is no justification for discrimination. Let me add here, that whenever you see a statement on the label that a product is artificially colored, and this statement is made in small obscure type, as if the manufacturer was ashamed of it, you will be justified in assuming that the manufacturer wishes to hide the fact that he has colored the food product in question. In such circumstances you will be justified in refusing to buy.

You will encounter such statements on labels as "Contains no Coal Tar Dyes" or "The color used in this product is purely vegetable." When a manufacturer makes such a statement he is endeavoring to capitalize upon an old prejudice, against coal tar colors, and favorable to vegetable colors. Let me assure you, my friends, that certified synthetic colors are just as wholesome as the vegetable colors.

In the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, only colors which have been included in a selected list and known not to be injurious to health are certified for use in food. The Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration examines samples of food colors, which manufacturers wish to sell as Certified Colors. If upon chemical test, such samples are pure and wholesome in every way, then the batch represented by the sample is given a lot number by the Government, and that lot of color may be sold as Certified Color, and any food in which it is used may be labeled as containing certified color.

Again, let me urge you to read labels intelligently, when you see artificial color declared on labels of food products, consider very carefully what it means, what its true significance is, and guide yourselves accordingly.

My friends, I have been talking to you for seventeen weeks now. I know that the thousands who have written are interested and I get my reward in inspiration in the knowledge that I am being helpful to you. It would be an inspiration to me, it would make my work very much more delightful if I could know that every one of you who are listening are with me in my effort to make every housewife in the Nation an intelligent buyer of foods. Won't you write me only a postal card, asking for the printed information sheets on the extensive list of read-the-label products already covered and that which is to come. Won't you do this much to show your interest and to give me a further inspiration for this work. Write to W. R. M. Wharton, U. S. Department of Agriculture, 201 Varick Street, New York City. I will be with you again next week at this hour.